

# The Federal Flyer

## USDOT Announces FY 2001 Highway Discretionary Selections Texas Receives Only 4.3% of Discretionary Funds

Secretary of Transportation Rodney Slater waited until just before Election Day to announce awards for several FY 2001 federal-aid highway discretionary programs. In the distribution of these limited federal dollars, Texas has received only \$22.8 million, or 4.3% of the distributed funds. Since Texas contributed approximately 8.28% of the revenues into the Highway Trust Fund in 1998 (the latest year available), Texas has received only a 52 cents on the dollar return through FHWA's discretionary programs this year. Many of the funds Texas received are due not to USDOT discretion but instead to congressional discretion through earmarks in the FY 2001 Transportation Appropriations Act, which was enacted into law on October 23, 2000. Texas' goal is to receive at least a 90.5 cents on the dollar in all federal-aid highway discretionary program distributions combined. To receive our "fair share" in FY 2001, Texas should receive closer to \$40 million.

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**Texas Projects by Program.** Texas has received project allocations in the following federal-aid highway discretionary programs: Intelligent Transportation Systems Deployment, Transportation and Community and System Preservation Pilot Program, Innovative Bridge Research and Construction Program, National Corridor Planning and Development Program, Coordinated Border Infrastructure Program, Ferry Boats and Terminals Program, Public Lands Highways Program, and Interstate Maintenance Discretionary Program. The USDOT has not yet announced the project selections for the Bridge Rehabilitation and Replacement Discretionary Program. Refer to the table on page two for specific Texas project information and comments.

As indicated above, Texas' funding goal for all federal-aid highway funds distributed to the states, combined, is a rate of return of at least 90.5 cents on the dollar on the state's contributions to the Highway Trust Fund. Thus far, Texas has received only \$79 million in discretionary highway program funds for a rate of return of only 50 cents on the dollar, which drags down our guaranteed return of 90.5 cents on the dollar in formula apportionments and allocations for congressional High Priority projects. Our low rate of return from discretionary programs at the midpoint of TEA 21 represents a formidable challenge to the Texas delegation and to TxDOT if we are to attain our overall six-year goal of at least \$350 million.

## Election Changes Congressional Balance of Power

Although the final results of the presidential election are still undetermined, we can begin to look at the results of the congressional elections. The House of Representatives will see little change in the balance of power, with the Republicans maintaining a six seat majority. However, the Senate has gone through a major shakeup, with four of the more conservative Republican senators being replaced

by Democrats.

The challenge of managing the Senate has often been compared to herding cats, but the task just became more difficult with the Republican majority slipping to just one seat. When the 107th Congress convenes in January 2001, Senate Republicans will have to respond to Senate Democrats demanding greater power sharing. After the election, **Senate Democrat Leader Tom Daschle** (South Dakota) said "if we're at 50-50 in the Senate, it would seem to me that we ought to be 50-50 in committee." This situation will pose a challenge for senators of both parties vying for key committee assignments.

It will take a few weeks to analyze all of the fallout of Election 2000 and potential effects on transportation in Texas. We hope to have a more in-depth look soon.

### Texas FY 2001 Highway Discretionary Program Project Selections

Discretionary Program	Project	Amount	Comments
Intelligent Transportation System Deployment Program	San Antonio HAR Implementation on IH 35	\$79,536	Congressional Earmark
	Beaumont Regional ITS Architecture & Deployment Plan	\$119,305	Congressional Earmark
	College Station (TTI)	\$1,431,656	Congressional Earmark
	Corpus Christi (vehicle dispatching)	\$795,364	Congressional Earmark
	Williamson County/Round Rock ITS Integration	\$198,841	Congressional Earmark
	Austin 911 RDMT Project Integration	\$198,841	Congressional Earmark
	Texas Border CVO Stations—Phase I (Houston)	\$397,682	Congressional Earmark
	Seabrook	\$954,437	Congressional Earmark
Transportation and Community and System Preservation Pilot Program	Houston Main Street Connectivity Project	\$704,625	Congressional Earmark
	Fort Worth trolley study	\$704,625	Congressional Earmark
Innovative Bridge Research and Construction Program	FM 1362 over Sue Creek	\$95,000	
	SH 66 Eastbound lanes over Lake Ray Hubbard	\$300,000	
National Corridor Planning and Development Program	Radio Road Overpass, Sulphur Springs	\$1,186,650	Congressional Earmark
	I-69 Corridor	\$2,637,000	Congressional Earmark
	I-35 Corridor Expansion, Waco	\$1,164,675	Congressional Earmark
Coordinated Border Infrastructure Program	Columbia, Laredo POE	\$308,000	
	Bridge of the Americas, El Paso POE	\$1,500,000	
	Pharr POE	\$1,500,000	
	Border Safety Inspection Facilities ROW	\$1,400,000	
	Reconstruct Mile 2 West, Hidalgo County	\$1,200,000	
	El Paso POE Improvement Plan	\$450,000	
	Port of Corpus Christi (North Harbor)	\$879,000	Congressional Earmark
Ferry Boats and Terminals Program	Big Mineral Creek Bridge	\$229,840	
Public Lands Highways Program			
Interstate Maintenance Program	IH 635/US 75 Interchange	\$4,400,000	

Note: Dollar figures in this table reflect obligation limit reductions.

The **Federal Flyer** is a publication of the TxDOT Legislative Affairs Office. It is intended to provide up-to-date information on major legislative activities in the 106th Congress for the management of the Texas Department of Transportation, state leaders, and others interested in Texas transportation issues. This report will also feature key activities in the national transportation community. Sources include news services and staff reports.

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